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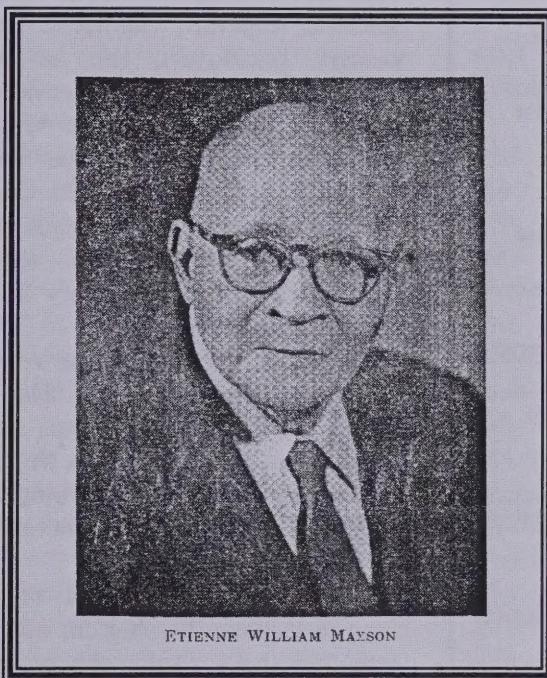
Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

November 2010

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The November luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, November 18, 2010, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Kay Gough of Bay Books who will discuss great gift books for the Christmas season. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call **by noon on Wednesday, November 17**, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-five people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

The main order of business at this meeting is the election of board members to serve from January 2011 through December 2013. If you would like to serve or to recommend someone, please call 467-4090 or nominate from the floor at the November meeting. The offices being filled this year are first vice president, secretary, treasurer, and member at large. A special "thank you" to those who have served on the board during these past two years.



Etienne William Maxson  
(1864-1957)

A native of Pearlington, teacher, Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue, Commissioner of Elections, postmaster, employee of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and author of *The Progress of the Races*

## *The Progress of the Races*

Compiled and edited by  
Eddie Coleman

The son of former slaves, Etienne William Maxson, was described by Gail C. Fusco, his great-grandniece, as "a short, thick man, with green eyes and a rim of white hair." Prominent not only in Hancock County but also in Washington, DC, Mr. Maxson was a one time school teacher, who also served as Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue at New Orleans from 1891-1892 and as Commissioner of Elections of Hancock County from 1892-1894. In 1900

he was appointed postmaster of Pearlington and continued at this post until 1917. The seventeen years and five months term he served was longer than any other postmaster on the Pearl River. During his time in office, the postal service on the steamboat route increased from two to four mails a day. In addition, he convinced the post office to install boxes with locks, and gross receipts exceeded those of his predecessors.

In 1917 Maxson lost his job as postmaster during the administration of President Woodrow Wilson. Subsequently, he moved to Washington, D. C., and worked for the Air Service Bureau of the War Department. After World War I he was

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 Pat Fuchs, Publisher

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 HOURS**

MONDAY — FRIDAY  
 10:00AM — 3:00PM  
 Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)

**MISSION STATEMENT**

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

employed by the Department of Agriculture in Washington.

In addition to these accomplishments, Mr. Maxson wrote a small book entitled *The Progress of the Races*. In it he gives brief histories of the towns along the lower Pearl River including Pearlington, Logtown, Napoleon, and Gainesville and lists of prominent black schooner captains, engineers, carpenters, bricklayers, etc., of the time. Moreover, he helps us understand the interaction of the races, black and white, during the later part of the 19th and early 20th Centuries. The following passages are taken from Mr. Maxson's book. [ed. note: I have edited very little of Mr. Maxson's work.]

"Doubtless the first white settler at Pearlington was Simon Favre, a Frenchman, who was sent there from Mobile by the United States Government, as a pioneer about 150 years ago [c. 1780's] to civilize the Indians.

"Mr. Favre settled on a farm just above Pearlington, which extended about a mile above to a landing on Pearl River known as 'The Gin' (afterward named Favreport). Among the most prominent of his descendants were Captain Joseph A. Favre and Honorable Theophilus M. Favre, better known as 'Off Favre.' Captain Favre was vice-president of the Poitevent & Favre Lumber Company, was president of the J. A. Favre Lumber Company, and manufactured lumber at Favreport on the old farm first owned by his grandfather. He was also president of the board of supervisors, and treasurer of Hancock County for a number of years.

"The Honorable T. M. Favre, the brother of Captain Favre, was a partner in the mercantile department of the Poitevent & Favre Lumber Company. He also ran a turpentine business of his own. He

was the Representative of Hancock County in the Mississippi Legislature along in the 'seventies and Collector of Customs at Bay Saint Louis, Miss., under President Cleveland.

"Before the Civil War, all of the cotton raised on Pearl River was brought down the river on flat-boats to the old farm and ginned at the historic landing known as 'The Gin,' after which the cotton was shipped to New Orleans on schooners and steamboats.

"Etienne Maxson, the father of the writer, when a boy, rode the mules that turned the mill to gin the cotton. The first dry-dock used for the construction and repair of ships at New Orleans was built at this landing.

"'Calker' Harrison, one of the oldest calkers in the shipyards on Pearl River and on the coast of Mississippi, who had nearly reached the century mark when he died in New Orleans about twenty years ago [early 1900's], calked on this dry-dock. Usan Vaughn and Sylvester Marchand, though slaves, worked as carpenters on this dry-dock.

"New Orleans first supplied the carry-log for the timber-getter of Louisiana and Mississippi. The carry-log wheels originally had a narrow tread about four inches wide, but was improved by Usan Vaughn, a colored slave owned by Nezan Favre, at Pearlington. Vaughn's improvement expanded the tread on the carry-log wheels to eight and ten inches, and increased the height or diameter, which enabled the timber-men to haul any size log or stick of timber of the yellow pine that grew so large and abundantly on the Pearl River in antebellum days. For every pair of carry-log wheels Vaughn's master received \$100, exclusive of the axle, tongue, and tackle. He sup-

plied all of the timber-getters on Pearl River with these wheels, and the carry-log on this wise continued in use in Louisiana and Mississippi until the log truck was invented.

"Vaughn bought his wife, Annie, from her master while he remained a slave, but the martyred President Lincoln's Proclamation of Emancipation set him free, and he had the pleasure of enjoying freedom with his beloved wife a few years before their decease.

"Sylvester Marchand was owned by the same master as Vaughn, but was sold to a man at Bay Saint Louis, who owned many houses that he rented on the coast of Mississippi and in New Orleans.

"Marchand, being a splendid carpenter, his new master assigned him the job of building and keeping his houses in repair, alternating between the coast of Mississippi and New Orleans. These colored men were constructive geniuses, even in slave time. It is interesting to note also that the first ship built in America was built by Negroes on the coast of North Carolina.

#### African-American Captains

"The Poitevent & Favre Lumber Company was the first on Pearl River to employ colored captains and engineers on their schooners and boats, first to have colored sawyers in their mills, and [first to employ them] as contractors and stevedores. As early as 1869 they began to favor colored employees in this way, and the precedent set by this company has been followed by all of the lumbermen on Pearl River and by some on the coast of Mississippi and in Louisiana.

"Captain Willis Vaughn and Henry Willis were the first colored men to own a schooner on Pearl River. They owned the barge

*Vina* and usually loaded wood and coal at Napoleon for New Orleans.

"In 1869, the Poitevent & Favre Lumber Company employed Gilbert Burton as the first colored captain on Pearl River. He mastered the schooner *Emma Jane*. It is true that colored men ran their masters' vessels in slave time on Pearl River and Lake Pontchartrain, carrying commodities into New Orleans, but they were mere sailing masters and not full-fledged captains, because a white man had to be on board to clear the law.

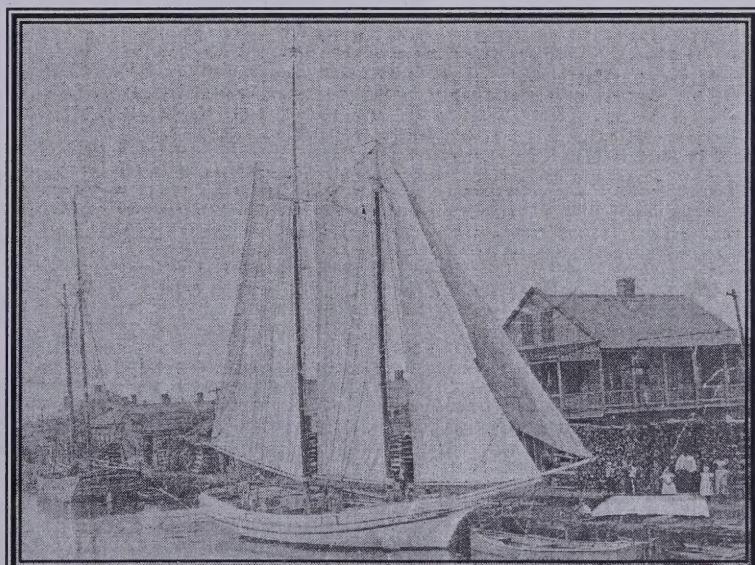
"But Captain Burton was the first colored captain with a colored crew who was master from stem to stern. Captains Smith King and Anatole McKan were next employed by the same company. Captain King ran the schooner *Alie McGuigin* and steamer *Major White*. Captain McKan succeeded Captain Burton on the schooner *Emma Jane*. He ran the *Emma Jane* twice and the schooners *Lillie Schmidt* and *Ella C. Andrews*. The *Andrews* was the largest lake vessel plying the waters of Pearl River, Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne, and the Mississippi Sound. Captain McKan ran this vessel outside to Ship Island, Miss.; Fort Eads, La.; Galveston, Tex.; and Key West, Fla. He was probably in the

employ of the Poitevent & Favre Lumber Company about twenty-five years.

"Captain McKan [was] a unique character. He was born a slave at Covington, La....the same year [1841] that the *Charles Morgan* was built at New Bedford, Mass., the oldest sailing wooden ship afloat today....He was a soldier in the Civil War...[and] trained most of the colored sailors on Pearl River.

"Captain McKan's first wife, Rosa McKan, gave to him sons and daughters. His second wife, Malinda McKan, helped to raise his children and to acquire property. They owned five schooners at different times and some good real estate. They ran their business on a fifty-fifty basis. Captain Annison Thompson and Captain Stanford Thompson, whom he trained to be sailors, were his brothers-in-law. His sons, Captain Stanford McKan and Captain Nicholas McKan, whom he also trained, are splendid sailors. The former is a ship carpenter.

"When Captain McKan's advanced years made him quit the lakes, his sons ran his schooners and he handled the business end of the cargoes and kept the vessels in running order. His two oldest daugh-



A lumber schooner, perhaps similar to the ones used on the Pearl River

ters married men who afterward became captains, namely, Captain Dudley Cloud and Captain John Peters.

"Captains Anatole McKan, Annison Thompson, Augustus Lolow, Alexander Wooten, and Stephen Peters ran the largest schooners on Pearl River, and for sometime the largest on the lakes and sounds. They ran to what was called outside, which meant outside of all the lakes and sounds into the Gulf of Mexico, to Ship Island, Horn Island, Port Eads, Galveston, and Key West.

"The colored captains on Pearl River were said to be the best sailors in these waters and carried the best crews. They ran some of the fastest vessels. Their cargoes were chiefly lumber. To say that a man was from Pearl River was all the recommendation that he needed to get a job to handle lumber anywhere."

[Editor's note: Mr. Maxson lists eighty-nine Negro captains and the vessels they mastered in his book.]

#### SOURCES:

Fusco, Gail C. *Mama Nettie's Time To Love*. LaVergne, TN: Xulon Press, 2010.

Maxson, Etienne William. *The Progress of the Races*. Washington, D.C.: Murray Brothers Printing Co., 1930; reprinted Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1955.

Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

#### Second Basque Lecture

Michel Antoine Goitia-Nicolas of New Orleans, president of the Louisiana Basque Society and Cultural Organization, will present a lecture on the Basque connections to families on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The lecture will be held at the Hancock County Historical Society from 1:00 P. M. until 3:00 P. M. on Tuesday, November 16, 2010. Please call the Lobrano House at

228-467-4090 for reservations.

#### Did You Know This about Hancock County?

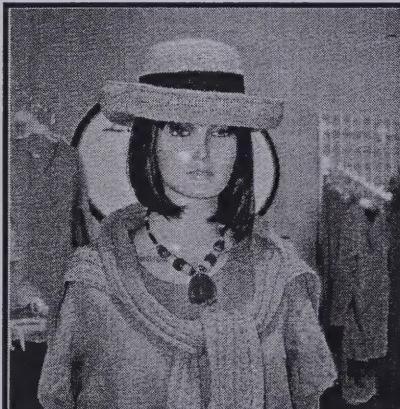
By  
Scott Bagley

Did you know that Hancock County was one of six locations considered for the site of what was to become the John C. Stennis Space Center? Soon after President Kennedy announced on May 25, 1961, that the United States would land on the moon by the end of the decade, a search was begun for a site to test rockets for the Apollo lunar landing program. A selection committee was established and convened out of the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, on August 7, 1961, to evaluate possible areas in which to test Saturn and Nova-class rockets.

The site selection committee determined that the ideal test site had to meet the following requirements: isolation from populated communities (because of the

noise associated with the boosters); accessibility by water and highway; availability of utilities; supporting communities within fifty miles; and a climate permitting year-round testing. A short period of investigation cut the possible sites to six possible locations: New Orleans (at a site thirty-four miles southeast of the city on the Bayou La Loutre peninsula); Brownsville and Corpus Christi, Texas; Cumberland Island, Georgia; Eglin Air Force Base, Florida; and the Pearl River site in Mississippi.

Members of the committee made onsite inspections between August 9 and August 17, 1961. The Pearl River site, it appears, merited closer examination. A member of the team, Bernard Tessman, a German colleague of Werner von Braun's at the German rocket test facility at Peenemunde, recalled how unsuspecting the residents of Hancock County were of the intentions of the investigating team. "We made some trips through the Pearl River [site] by boat with the district engineers. We met some people, but they were all so friendly and invited



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s for a cup of coffee and would ask questions." He also recalled being "shocked" when he visited the Pearl River site. He described it as a wilderness and recalled that "it was bad back in 1935 in Peenenmunde, but Mississippi was even worse for me, because you couldn't walk...[e]verywhere was water and mud."

The final report of the selection committee concluded that Hancock County, Mississippi, was the best site. NASA maintained the decision was based purely on the merits of the Pearl River location. Not everyone agreed, and some suggested that Mississippi Senator John Stennis exerted influence on NASA. In any event, the public release on October 25, 1961, that the Hancock County location had been selected came as a surprise to practically everyone including the people in the Pearl River area. The residents of this area soon learned that NASA intended to acquire easement rights to approximately 128,000 acres surrounding the test site. The lives of these residents were to be forever changed.

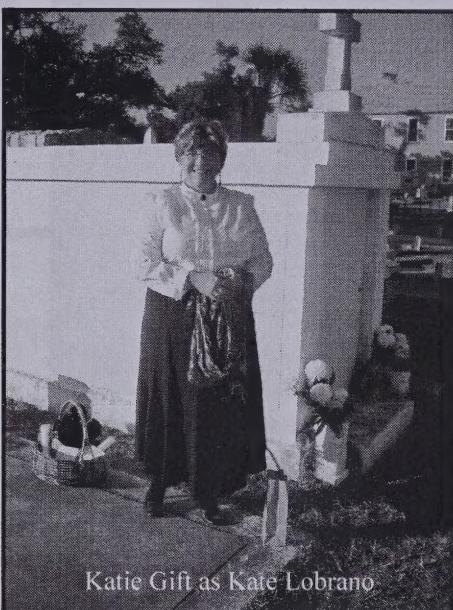
#### SOURCE:

Herring, Mark R. *Way Station to Space: A History of the John C. Stennis Space Center*. Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1997.

### The Seventeenth Annual Cemetery Tour

The Seventeenth Annual Cemetery Tour sponsored by the Hancock County Historical Society was held at Cedar Rest Cemetery on October 31, 2010. Jackie Allain, president of the Historical Society, dedicated many long hours to planning this year's event. Because of her research three new characters have been added to the tour: Dr. Cyrus M. Shipp, a Yellow Fever Victim of 1897, and Ettie Bookter Mitchell. With the help and dedication of many

volunteers and actors, this year's tour was a sensational success. Tour guides led visitors through the cemetery stopping along the way for past citizens to tell highlights of their lives.



Katie Gift as Kate Lobrano

The apparition of **Kate Lobrano** was the first character to greet guests. She owned the house which is now the home of the Hancock County Historical Society and with her husband maintained residences in Pointe a la Hache, LA, and Bay St. Louis.

The ethereal appearance of **Joan Newman Seal** explained that



Susan Siekmann as Joan Newman Seal

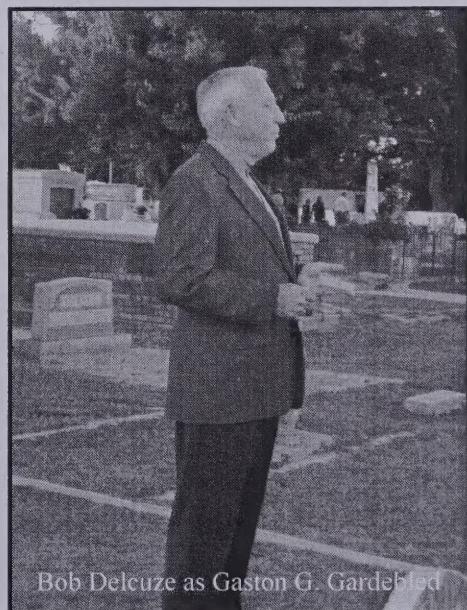
she had been a woman of means. She was a landowner who donated the south section of Cedar Rest Cemetery to the city of Bay St. Louis.

Emerging in the southern part of the cemetery, the spirit of **Powhatan Robertson** discussed her life. She was a young Indian girl whose remains were moved to Cedar Rest from the old St. Charles Street burial ground.



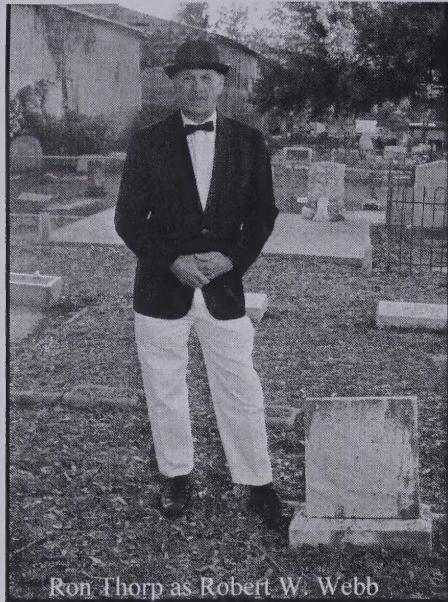
Natalie Bartel as Powhatan Robertson

The next spiritual presence to appear was that of **Gaston G. Gardebled**. A contractor in Bay St. Louis, he erected many prominent buildings,



Bob Delcuze as Gaston G. Gardebled

including old City Hall, which he later occupied as mayor.

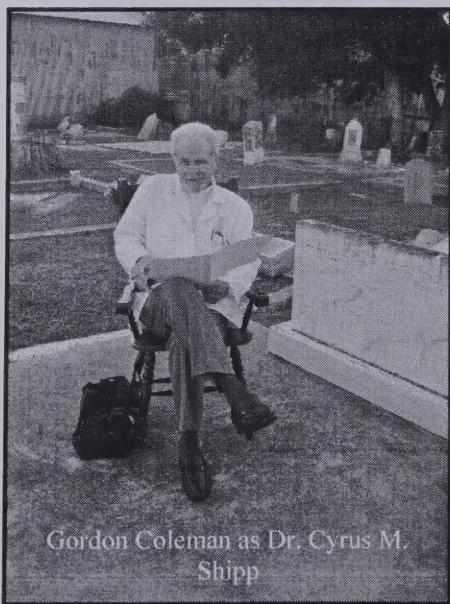


Ron Thorp as Robert W. Webb

The incorporeal being of **Robert W. Webb** appeared near his grave toward the back of the cemetery. Known as the "Father of the Seawall," he was one of the most accomplished mayors of Bay St. Louis.

The phantasm of **Dr. Cyrus M. Shipp** became visible at his grave. He revealed that he was the first public health officer in Hancock County and that he served for fourteen years.

Moving further along the path, guests encountered the spiritual



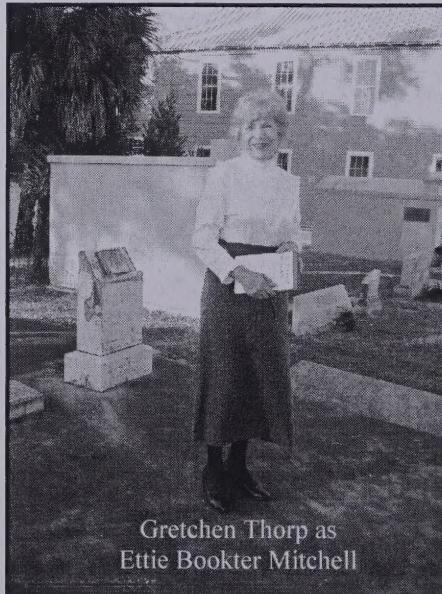
Gordon Coleman as Dr. Cyrus M. Shipp



Joan Coleman as a Yellow Fever Victim of 1897

presence of a **Yellow Fever Victim of 1897**. Because the victim's remains were cremated in compliance with a city ordinance issued during the 1897 outbreak, we never know where this spirit will appear in the cemetery.

Bringing the tour to an end, the spiritual form of **Ettie Booker Mitchell** recounted events of her life in Bay St. Louis. Her family donated a strip of land to the city which became Booker Street.



Gretchen Thorp as Ettie Booker Mitchell

As the last of the visitors left the cemetery and the last of the candles were extinguished, the spirits of those past citizens who had appeared returned to their resting places until their next embodiment on All Hallows' Eve.

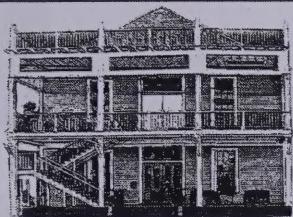
Thanks to everyone who volunteered to help with the Seventeenth Annual Cemetery Tour—the actors, guides, set-up crew, house crew, and people who donated treats.

*Jackie Allain,  
President of the  
Hancock County  
Historical Society*

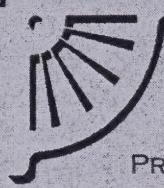


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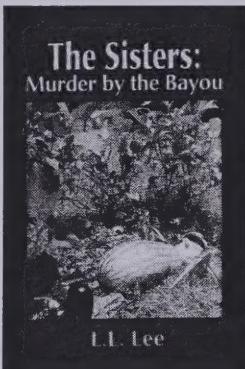
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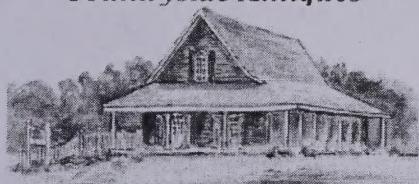


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